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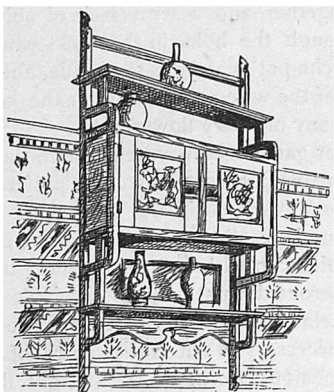
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## SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME DECORATION.

If a traveler, after an absence from America of a dozen years or so, spent in some corner of the globe where no news from this country had reached him, should now return home, what a revolution he would find has been effected in what we call household art! How much more comfortable and homelike he would find our houses are than they were in former years! And they are made so, he would see, not necessarily by the outlay of large sums of money, but by means of simple attempts at decoration, which, while they improve the mind and educate the taste of the female members of the family who are most devoted to them, are a source of pleasure to every member of the household.

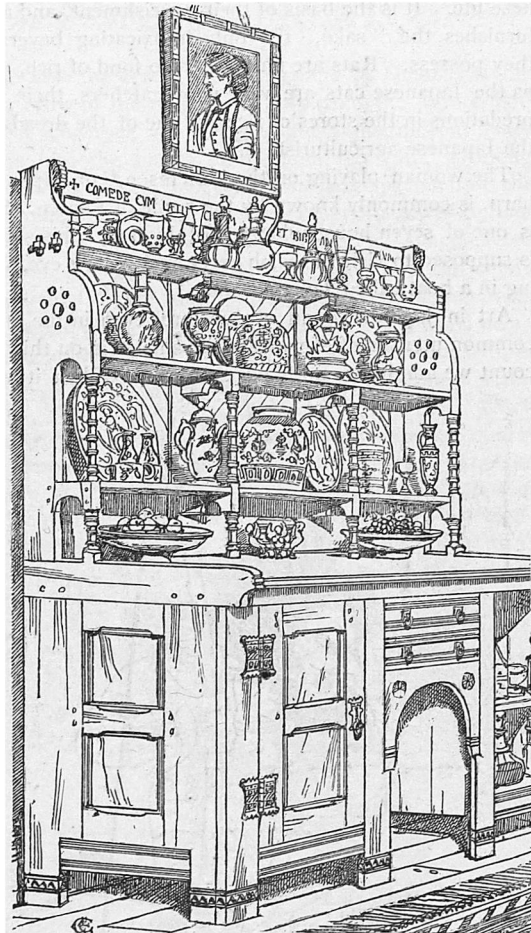
Panels and decorative plaques may be made in the most simple manner and out of very ordinary materials; even the top of a cigar-box may be ornamented with the painting of a flower or a twig of some blossoming shrub and become a work of art, which has the more value in owing its merit, not to the money expended on it, but to the artistic taste displayed in its effective decoration. Larger panels may be made in wood, the surface of which is not polished enough to hide the grain. These can be gilded and then decorated; the edges can be beveled and painted with either vermilion or black, and by using any one of a hundred devices which a little thought and ingenuity will suggest, each house may become a little sanctuary of art, showing the individuality of the occupant. In the same way hangings, lambrequins and portières can be made out of the most ordinary materials—perhaps the coarser the better—and decorated either with a few stitches of crewel work, with pieces of colored cloth or stuff applied and stitched on in bands, or even with touches of paint. Bits of inexpensive crockery distributed here and there, brightening up dark corners or relieving the monotonous tints of the walls, all help to give the home a cheerful and cosy appearance. The revival of the mediæval style of furniture, which is now so general, and which came to us from England associated with the name of Eastlake, has revolutionized the trade, and it is becoming rare to find in stores, even in remote districts, any of those old-fashioned ponderous sets of furniture which used to overwhelm our innocent taste with their awkward curves, barbarous colors, and impossible paintings of flowers and landscapes often cut out from badly-colored lithographs and varnished over after they were pasted on the panels they were supposed to decorate. One of the principal features of this innovation in furniture is the compactness of the pieces and the facility with which they can be manufactured. A person of average good taste, with the suggestion of, for instance, such drawings as we publish in the present article, can easily design an article suitable for a particular spot, and as this style does not require as much finish, but, on the contrary, looks all the better for a certain roughness, it can be constructed and put together by any intelligent carpenter. The distinguishing feature of this kind of furniture is the absence of mouldings or beading. The



HANGING SHELF.

pieces, with few exceptions, are put together at right angles; they can be sawed out of plain stuff, and when properly planed can be either rubbed with oil or lightly varnished. The ornamental lines, if any are required, can be cut into the wood, and, if light wood is used, painted in vermilion. If the wood is stained black, brass powder mixed with varnish produces an excellent substitute for gilding. Ornamental hinges, or lock plates, can be sawed out of sheet brass of sufficient thickness, and when polished, mounted on the furniture with screws. In a word, any person with a little artistic

taste can finish and decorate the piece he may have designed without much assistance. Painted tiles can also be introduced with good effect. For instance, in our first illustration, which represents a combination of a sideboard or "buffet" with a bookcase or cabinet, each one of the small square panels might contain a decorated tile. This piece of furniture is suitable either for the library or the dining-room. The upper shelves will hold books or ornaments, and the piece of drapery in the central section may, if judiciously selected in regard to color, have also a very decorative effect.



SIDEBOARD IN EASTLAKE STYLE.

Another illustration shows an arrangement of shelves which can be built over an ordinary mantelpiece. In the centre is a rectangular mirror with a beveled edge, and on each side two spaces, the backs of which can be filled according to the taste of the constructor either with mirrors, plain decorated panels, faience plaques, or simple bits of drapery. On the shelf above, running straight across, plates or little "curios" may be placed, and the central medallion can contain a concave or flat mirror or a painted plate. To complete this piece of furniture, there should be a lambrequin or drapery around the mantelshelf, coming down as far as the top of the tiles which frame the fireplace. The drapery might hang in parallel folds, not too full, in the style indicated in the upper part of the cabinet in the first illustration. A still greater improvement would be to hang under this, at each side, folds of the same material sufficiently long to hide the two ends of the structure of the mantel.

The dining-room sideboard or dresser given on this page is more distinctly Gothic in its outline. The plainness of its construction, with no attempt to conceal the pegs and keys which hold it together, seems to appeal more to the constructing genius of a carpenter than to that of a furniture builder. This piece shows us ornamental hinges and knobs, and at the top there is an inscription recommending cheerfulness while taking our meals. The letters may be cut by an inexperienced hand, for a certain amount of irregularity is quite in keeping with Gothic lettering. A very rich effect is produced by lining the back of the shelves with stamped paper made in imitation of cordova leather. Stamped velvet would be preferable, but we have only alluded to the least expensive materials in this article. The picture frame above the sideboard is not without merit. A plain mat in rough gilt card-board sets off most pictures to great advantage; the square frame is in this case ornamented with an indicated scroll. The two hanging cabinet illustrations need but little explanation; such articles are particularly useful in small rooms where but limited space can be allotted to the furniture standing on the ground. The design of the one in the next column is exceedingly simple. Our young

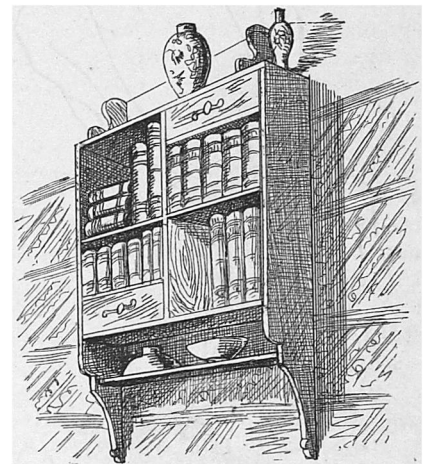
readers can find no more interesting occupation for their leisure moments than laying out and designing some simple pieces of decorative furniture, beginning with wall brackets, for instance. These they can cut out themselves—some special instruction in fret-saw work is to be given in future numbers of THE ART AMATEUR—and after a while they will be able to construct many a useful and ornamental piece of decorative furniture.

## HOUSE JAPANESE DECORATION.

DURING the past few years a great change has come over what we might call our notions of the industrial, and particularly the decorative, arts, and this "Renaissance" in the nineteenth century, as it has been not inaptly called, may be traced in a great measure to the influence brought about by the opening of the Japanese ports to export trade. This has been the means of making us familiar with the manufactures of Japan, and little by little of showing us how absurd were our own systems of decoration with all their barbarous mannerisms and conventionalities, compared to the simple and natural methods employed by these men of the East whom for ages we had, in our bigoted ignorance, supposed to be little better than savages.

The art of Japan has grown out of the inherent love of its people for nature. They live in a climate where nearly all the time can be spent out of doors, and where the Creator seems to have lavished the finest treasures of scenery, foliage and other natural advantages. The most singular feature of the history of Japan is that this race of men, which originally emigrated from the Tartar tribes of Northern Asia, was entirely cut off from communication with the rest of the world, and it was long after it had dreamed out a mythology of its own and evolved out of nature, so to speak, an art peculiar to itself, that it began to feel the influence of the Chinese, its nearest neighbors. Thus it is that about all their productions there is an original basis of a special natural element, to which the intercourse with other nations has added, but which will always remain undisturbed. It is to this foundation of art that we must look in the Japanese for suggestions rather than to their more recent attempts in which they have striven to adapt themselves to what they think, or to what ignorant merchants tell them, to be the requirements of a foreign trade.

So much has been written and said about the art of Japan that it is not necessary—nor would it be within the limits of the present article—for us to go over the old ground again. Yet there are two points which cannot be too much insisted upon; these are its subtleness and its truth. For the Japanese the bare suggestion of a waterfall, the outline of a hill, a branch or a flower, is sufficient to indicate a particular spot or season, and our oriental neighbors at first had a good deal of trouble before they could be made to understand why in our pictures we went into such elaborate details and took



HANGING BOOKCASE.

so much pains with work which they considered quite unnecessary. As to truth, especially in decorative art, the Japanese have taught us many a lesson. Their decoration, though often in spots, is never patchy, and the plants and flowers seem to crowd around the vases, as nature would have them do, instead of arranging themselves more or less symmetrically round the pieces according to the taste of the artist, guided by the precise rules of so-called art. We never find large bunches of flowers or fruits stuck in the centre of regularly shaped medallions or panels and supported there by no

visible means, in opposition to all the laws of gravitation. In their designs a twig starting from the bottom or dropping from the top supports a reasonable quantity of leaves and flowers, which are arranged as naturally as possible.

Symmetry is not often found in their decoration, yet in European art nothing has been thought good unless it was balanced. They never make use of the human figure to torture it into all kinds of impossible beings with or without tails, arms, wings, horns and similar accoutrements. Their art is evolved from nature, and nature is not cruel enough to torture its noblest work. It was Grecian art evolved from the brain of man which placed the world on the shoulders of an unfortunate demi-god. The Japanese placed it on a turtle, the animal endowed with the greatest strength. For decorative purposes he invented the dragon, which as a monster is far more ornamental and much less disagreeable than the devil of European art.

The illustrations of the present article, which have been culled from various Japanese sources, will give the reader an idea of the versatility in art of this most interesting people.

The four ancient warriors, three of whom are archers, represent very different types. Two of them are common soldiers from the rank and file, and seem as if they were bundled up in their clothes in a rather uncomfortable manner. Another, in armor, is the famous archer Minamoto Tamatomo. His strength was enormous, and the fact that his right arm was shorter than his left enabled him to draw a bow which four ordinary warriors could not bend. According to Japanese mythology, he was born of a virgin. The Japanese bows are made in most cases of two pieces of unequal length fastened to a handle or grip. This is accounted for by the fact that they usually knelt down to shoot, the shorter part of the bow being below and the longer above. Though gunpowder and firearms had been known in Japan for several centuries, they still continued to use arrows and armor made of lacquer up to the end of the war in 1859, after which the country was subjected to the influence of modern civilization.

An excellent example of one of the peculiarities of Japanese art is shown in the drawing of the two monkeys.



ANCIENT JAPANESE ARCHER.

How suggestive are those touches of black! The treatment of the branch of the tree is also very strong. The picture would be a charming bit to embroider or stitch in

black silk on white, the worker endeavoring to reproduce each touch by a single stitch.

In the domain of caricature the Japanese are not behind other nations. The sketch of the "Blind Leading the Blind" is full of quaint humor. The blind beggars form quite a tribe. They earn a scanty livelihood by playing on a double-reed flute, and occasionally sham-pooing travelers. We find one of them at work in one of our illustrations.

The "Rat Rice Merchants," which reminds one of Grandville's illustrations to the fables of Lafontaine, is based upon the fact that rice is the mainstay of Japanese life. It is the basis of their nourishment, and also furnishes the "saké," the only intoxicating beverage they possess. Rats are naturally also fond of rice, and as the Japanese cats are very poor catchers, their depredations in the stores of rice are one of the dreads of the Japanese agriculturist.

The woman playing on the "Siemens," or Japanese harp, is commonly known by the name of Benten. She is one of seven household gods of Japan. This septet is supposed to visit the earth every New Year's eve, sailing in a boat called Takara-bune.

Art in Japan is found everywhere, even in the most common utensils of every-day life, and it is on this account we admire it and like it so much. When it was



MINAMOTO TAMATOMO.

first introduced into America our people, attracted by it, were amused by its novelty, but unconsciously, without reasoning why, we adopted it, and it has found its way everywhere, simply because it is natural, and the uneducated as well as the most cultivated can comprehend it.

What charming additions can be made to the decoration of a country house at this time of the year by the aid of a few inexpensive articles we can pick up at any of the Japanese stores! For instance, take some of those paper fans which open and close so neatly, and of such brilliant yet well harmonized tints; a few of them tacked up against a blank wall or on a frieze at once give style to the plainest room. They can be nailed closer together, and, as when spread out to the fullest extent, they form a perfect semi-circle, so they can be arranged two by two to form a complete circle, or alternately to form a scalloped border. Almost endless combinations can be made with them, and the best way to realize the fact is to cut out a few disks in paper, bisect them, and arrange them on a table. The fans, too, which do not close—those with the short stiff handles—can be used in a variety of ways either alone or combined with those previously mentioned. These vary in size. The latest imported have small bodies and long, slender handles; it is easy to see how prettily these can be worked in to lighten the pattern, which, made only with the short

stumpy fans, may be a little heavy. There are imitations of folding fans which do not shut up, made on purpose for wall decoration, but though manufactured



ANCIENT JAPANESE ARCHER.

in Japan, they never look so well as the real fan, for, after all, they are only imitations. A wall pocket can be made with one of these folding fans, the effect of which is often good. A piece of stout colored card-board of thin wood is cut in the form of a segment of a circle of a radius equal to that of the fan, the width of this piece depending on the distance the pocket is to stand out from the wall. The fan is then tacked, with the centre corresponding to the centre of the board and the two outside sticks on the outside of the segment, which naturally forms the back of the pocket resting against the wall. A few autumn leaves, a spray of long grass with a "cats'-tail" or two starting out of one of these ornaments, has a charming effect; but it must be borne in mind that the Japanese are very sparing in their decorative effects, which are always very light. Many a good intention may be spoiled in this style of wall decoration by putting too many things in the same basket. A variety of articles may be constructed with folding fans, from which the rivet which unites the sticks has been removed. If the two outside sticks are fastened together, and a wire circle of suitable size be passed through the holes in the sticks where the rivet was, a "cache-pot" can be easily made, and by altering the length of the wire at the bottom, the cover may be made to fit any ordinary flower-pot.

Shades for gas lamps may be made in the same way, although for this purpose parasols are preferable. These parasols are of various sizes. The sticks and part of the ribs can be easily removed, and the circular part which remains can with a little ingenuity be made useful for numerous decorative purposes. To cover an ordinary porcelain lamp-shade, such as is used on a drop-light, it is necessary to cut in the centre of the parasol a hole large enough to admit the straight flange at the top of the shade. Then cut the parasol down the side, following the direction of one of the ribs; it can then be wrapped around the shade, the part that overlaps being removed, care being taken to leave only just enough to hide the joint, which can either be sewn or fastened with ribbon. If the flange at the top is too high, a ribbon ruffle should be fastened at its base to conceal it. An inverted parasol fastened under a chandelier makes a charming shade in a country house, and the stem of the chandelier can be ornamented by wrapping round it strips of Japanese stuff and sticking into the folds the very small toy parasols we have all seen in the stores.



A picturesque chandelier to light up a piazza or a summer house can be made as follows: An inverted open Japanese parasol is hung up by the stick and



ANCIENT JAPANESE WARRIOR.

small paper lanterns holding candles are then suspended from the ends of the ribs. A parasol from which the centre piece and stick have been removed can be tacked against the ceiling over a chandelier, allowing the gas pipe to come through the opening in the centre; in this way it may be made useful in concealing the ugly plaster medallion which is slapped on most ceilings, or it may constitute in itself an ornamental centre if the ceiling is bare. Four smaller parasols tacked in the corners of the ceiling near the wall complete the decoration by forming four ornamental rosaces. Parasols cut in halves and tacked to the underside of brackets made of rough wood may be used for stands for vases or flower-pots. A Japanese fashion, often imitated with pleasing effect, is that of placing an entire branch of a flowering shrub or tree in a small vase containing water; to be quite in keeping with the Japanese style, the vase should hang against a wall and the branch emerge from the vase at an angle, though resting on the wall. Japanese crêpe paper pictures pasted on a wall form a neat frieze in a room where the ceiling is not too high. There also come from Japan long, narrow strips of wood (often made of wood of two different colors, neatly joined), painted with flowers. These can be hung upright or diagonally. The larger Japanese paintings on silk or linen placed against a wall are exceedingly handsome, but to preserve the real national effect we must remember not to place them symmetrically. A small one and a large one can very well be placed on the same wall at different heights, and it is not necessary that they should hang straight. Ordinary bamboo split in two used as a moulding is highly ornamental. It may be painted red or black; nailed round a painting on silk, it takes the place of a frame, only the ends must be allowed to cross one another.

The pleasant effect of matting with a few Japanese rugs on the floor can be much enhanced by running one width of the matting round the room like a wainscot. In a nursery it can be padded with straw and save the children many a bruise and knock. On a plain tinted wall a charming motive for flat decoration may be obtained by pasting over it very carefully some cottage muslin of a suitable pattern. This can be done with ordinary starch, but care must be taken not to fill up the network with paste. A few pictures or dried autumn leaves of brilliant hues, stuck on the wall previously, give color if it is required. The tint on the wall may be of two different colors joining in a diagonal line or in slanting alternate bands of unequal width. A very Japanese effect is given by letting them join not on a straight line, but on one of those irregular zigzag

lines such as is generally employed in pictures to represent lightning.

The variety of beautiful designs that can be made out of the most ordinary materials is almost endless. A little taste and imagination are all that is required to change the most ordinary house into one which has the stamp of true artistic elegance. And the great merit of this inexpensive mode of decorating is that as the outlay is small, it can easily be modified as new ideas on the subject occur to the occupant of the house.

FRÉDÉRIC VORS.

#### THE WONDERFUL BAHARISTAN CARPET.

AFTER the defeat of the Persians by Omar and the overthrow of the religion of Zoroaster, the White Palace of Khosroes was pillaged and a magnificent booty came into the hands of the rude Arabians. Among other things was a most extraordinary specimen of the embroiderer's art. This was a carpet of silk and cloth of gold, sixty cubits square. A garden was depicted thereon, the figures of gold embroidery and the colors heightened by precious stones, the ruby, the emerald, the sapphire, the beryl, the topaz, and the pearl being arranged with most consummate skill to represent, in beautiful mosaic, trees, fruit and flowers, rivulets, fountains, roses and shrubs of every description, which seemed to convey fragrance, and their foliage to charm the senses of the beholders. To this piece of exquisite luxury and illusion the Persians gave the name of "Baharistan," or "mansion of perpetual spring," which was an invention employed by their monarchs as an artificial substitute for the loveliest of seasons.



SHAMPOOING IN JAPAN.

During the gloom of winter they were accustomed to regale the nobles of their court where art had supplied the absence of nature, and wherein the guests might trace a brilliant imitation of her faded beauties in the variegated colors of the jeweled and pictured floor. The Arabian general, Ali Saad, persuaded his soldiers to relinquish their claim to it, in the reasonable hope that the eyes of the caliph would be delighted with this splendid combination of nature and skill. Regardless, however, of the merit of art and the pomp of royalty, the rigid Omar divided the prize among his brethren of Medina; the carpet was destroyed; but such was the value of the materials that the share of Ali alone was computed at twenty thousand drachms of gold—nearly fifty thousand dollars.

#### THE CINCINNATI DECORATIVE ART ROOMS.

CINCINNATI, July, 1879.

THE interest in art work felt in this city by the Women's Centennial Committee perpetuated itself in the Woman's Art Association of Cincinnati, which was organized in January, 1877, with the special purpose of advancing woman's work; but it was not until last winter that the art exhibition and salesrooms were opened. The purposes of opening these rooms were to encourage the production and raise the standard of artistic labor, and to serve as the missing link between the women who want the work to do and the public who want the work done.

All articles offered are submitted to the Committee on Admissions. If up to a certain standard they are

accepted, and if sold, a commission of ten per cent is retained by the Association. There are received water-color paintings, etchings, wood engravings, pen and ink drawings, artistically decorated articles for household and personal use, such as china and pottery, panels for furniture, embroideries of curtains, and other hangings of table and house linen, and original designs for embroideries; also painted screens and fans, decorated menus, note paper and lace work. The Association does not receive wax flowers and fruit, feather flowers, leather, hair and shell work, skeletonized leaves, knitting, crochet or Berlin wool work.

Three vases, a centre-piece and two side-pieces, made by Miss Louise McLaughlin to fill an order from Miss Annie Louise Carey, are just completed and on exhibition at the salesrooms of the association. They are of enamelled faience, bewilderingly rich and brilliant in their changeful glow of color. The centre-piece is a flat pilgrim jar of rich, iridescent, mottled green, against which the sunlight breaks into prismatic hues and shining lights. On one side is a spray of flowers, swaying grasses and marguerites, which are in quite perceptible relief, and on the other side is a butterfly. This vase seems as if it must be the identical one so exquisitely described in that new novel "Two Of Us," where your Washington correspondent, Miss Calista Halsey, or rather where the heroine, Theodora, speaks of "a vase with flowers melting through, modeled flowers heavy with color and bloom. You looked at them with the ends of your fingers. They appealed so to your sense of touch. Who wouldn't be a passionate pilgrim to drink from such a jar as that? . . . It is the Limoges glaze that has just been rediscovered by a lady artist; it is exquisite. That is the way Cana the Beautiful defied the Ages." The other pieces are of the most liquid, melting blue. The brilliance of the enamel is like sunshine on crystal, and as changeful as the crest of foam on the waves. On the side vases a spray of roses is breaking its heart of passionate bloom against that background of reposeful, softly shaded blue. The vases are of the common red clay, and are made at the Cincinnati pottery. The exquisite beauty of their decoration is, I think, unsurpassed by any previous work of Miss McLaughlin. The pieces will be on exhibition for a few days, and then they will be sent to Miss Carey at her home in Portland, Maine.

A special point of interest in a visit to the Decorative Art Rooms is found in the work in ceramics by Mrs. Plimpton, wife of one of the editors of The Cincinnati Commercial staff, a lady of rare culture, with a true feeling for art. Mrs. Plimpton may be said to have re-discovered the art of introducing figures in relief in faience—in this country at least. Instead of the ornamentation of birds, flowers, or sprays simply in color, her work shows such objects beautifully model-



THE GODDESS BENTEN.

ed, and standing out as clear as the cutting of a cameo. For many months she has been untiringly busy at this work, and many a time she has touched the plastic clay